

**Do not hesitate to contact your Physician or
Public Health Department Nurse if you are
concerned or have questions.**

*Panhandle Health District offices
are ready to serve you in each
of the five northern counties
of Idaho*

Kootenai County
8500 N. Atlas Road
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208 415-5100

Bonner County
1020 Michigan
Sandpoint ID 83864
208 263-5159

Boundary County
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Bonners Ferry ID 83805
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Benewah County
711 Jefferson
St. Maries ID 83861
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Shoshone County
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Kellogg ID 83837
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Idaho Reproductive Health Program

The Vaginal Ring



**Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Bureau of Clinical and Preventive Services**

General reference: Contraceptive Technology: 17th Rev. Ed., 1998 and Contraceptive Updates 2000-2003

How the vaginal ring works

The vaginal ring is a small, flexible transparent ring (2 inches across) that you place in your vagina. It releases a steady flow of low dose hormones. Like birth control pills, this combination of hormones stops your body from releasing an egg, so no egg can be fertilized. The hormones also cause the liquid at the opening of the uterus to thicken, which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the vaginal ring

The vaginal ring is a once-a-month method of birth control. You place the vaginal ring in your vagina and it stays there for three weeks. It releases a steady flow of hormones. Remove the ring for the fourth week. Your menstrual period will usually start two to three days after the ring is removed. A **new** vaginal ring must be inserted one week (seven days) after the last ring was removed to continue to prevent pregnancy. Do not reuse a vaginal ring for a second month. Remove a new ring from the refrigerator one hour prior to vaginal insertion to bring to room temperature. The exact placement of the ring is not important because **it does not work as a barrier method of birth control**. There is no danger that the vaginal ring will be pushed up too far in the vagina or “lost.” If your vaginal ring “falls out”, read the instructions or call your health provider for specific instructions.

Effectiveness

Because this method of birth control is relatively new, the research for effectiveness rates is not as extensive as for other hormonal methods. Currently, the perfect use effectiveness rate is 98%-99%; 1-2 women out of 100 will get pregnant when using the vaginal ring the correct way. Your chance of getting pregnant increases if you don't use it correctly or consistently.

Potential Risks

Some women should not use the vaginal ring because of specific health conditions. If a woman has a history of cardiovascular disease, it is recommended that she not use hormonal birth control methods. Ask your health provider about other health risks. Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular (blood clots, heart attack, stroke) side effects, especially for women over 35. Women who use combination hormonal contraceptives are strongly advised not to smoke. Do not use the vaginal ring while you are breastfeeding. Tell your health provider about any medications you are taking, including

Benefits of the vaginal ring

The ring is inserted once a month and in the privacy of your own home. It cannot be inserted the “wrong way”; it just needs to stay in your vagina for the required three weeks. It is not made of latex.

Potential side effects and disadvantages

Some women report vaginal infections and irritation, headaches, weight changes, nausea, irregular vaginal bleeding, abdominal cramps and breast tenderness. You may have other side effects. Ask your health provider about other possible side effects. Some women may be aware that the ring is in their vagina, but many women do not feel it once it is in place. You must feel comfortable putting the vaginal ring into your vagina and removing it. Using the vaginal ring **will not** give you protection against HIV/AIDS or sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

